

UPSTAIRS BULLETIN

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To COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER, even if we know each other very well, is extremely difficult. I may use words that may have to you a significance different from mine. Understanding comes when we, you and I, meet on the same level at the same time. That happens only when there is real affection between people, between husband and wife, between intimate friends. That is real communion. Instantaneous understanding comes when we meet on the same level at the same time.

- J. Krishnamurti

Many of our alumni seem to be in their "busy years" and have little time for any communication-at least by letter. Now and then news does seep through and we often have old friends and pupils drop into the studio to see us. JACK WARNER called to tell us about his package show of "Stop the World" which he has touring on his own. His group is comprised of 18 people which is really an undertaking. JAY DEVLIN is breaking into dramatics sometime this fall in a new play to open in Detroit. He was recently here directing the last show at Happy Medium..JULIE BICKING was appeared with the Jimmy Durante show at the Palmer House after school hours at Northwestern. ANITRA EARLE, a former SC pupil way back when, appears back on the Chicago scene as a critic on the Chicago Daily News. ASTA NELSON was a visitor in the school on her way back from Washington to Phoenix -and did not relish our very cold autumn weather. We hear that RONALD FRASIER, a former Scholarship student at SC is now singing and dancing the part of 'Stepping Life' in "Porgy and Bess" in the Scandavian countries. AARON GIRARD is teaching at the Royal Opera in Stockholm permanently. CHARLES SCHICK recently back from Sweden brought greetings and kind words from AARON. JUDY CONWAY, remember, is in Sweden also and we hear is to soon try out for SONIA AROVA'S company. Two SC girls on advice from the school have changed their interests to kindred subjects and both seem to be very happy about their change. MARILYN ALLEN is attending the American Academy of Arts in New York and LYNN

COLBURN avidly studying modern dance at Bennington under their very fine staff of teachers. Other SC students to have some success there have been KATHY POSIN, DAVID KROHN and MARTHA ARMSTRONG. JIM MOORE has now been announced officially as a rehearsal assistant for the American Ballet Theatre company. MARA LYNN BROWN (little Match Girl) has been going great guns as a popular singer and recently had a highly successful run at Mr. Kellys. BONNIE MATHIS & ALEXIS HOFF are both on their way up as soloists in the Rebecca Harkness Ballet. Their names have been listed on practically every program in the recent New York season. Hope that they have the same opportunity here in Chicago when they appear at the Auditorium sometime in January. MAGGIE SMITH, PENNY JAY, KAREN CARTWRIGHT and CAROL RUZIC were among the children used in the NY city production of "Midsummer Nights Dream". MARK TRUDEAU & NANCY GLYNN will do the leads in seven of the Nutcracker performances at the Opera House in December. Other children in it are JULIE SIPAL, KIM GARDINER, CHARLENE LEVITT, DEBBY MARTIN, BRUCE SMITH, JOHN RUZIC, ROBERT & JOSEPH WILCZYNSKI, LOREN & GREGORY GORSKI and JOHN JANKOWSKI. In the older groups NANCY MC CLOUD, KATHY PARKIN, LISA HOFFMAN, and RANDI SCHULTZ will appear. MARK GOLDMAN has been dancing at the IN the Round Dinner Theater since September and at the moment they are doing "West Side Story". NICOLE FINITZO has the lead in "Oklahoma" at Nazareth High School.

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People are slow. The Bulletin now in its eighth year is becoming more and more appreciated. Maybe some of its new subscribers would be interested in some of the early issues for 35 cents a copy. Some of the ones available have these articles-"Waiting for Class" by Wm. Maloney-"Eleven Men in "Les Sylphides" by Leo Kersley-"On the teaching of Art" by Wm. Maloney-Two issues on "Opera Ballet" by Walter Camryn-"Where are the young dancers" by Bentley Stone "Music and the Dance" by Walter Camryn-"The

anatomy and functions of the knee" by Steve Primis and "The care of the Feet" by Walter Camryn.

WONDER OF WONDERS! Chicago has finally saved something worthwhile. Politicians and greedy real estate promoters have been instrumental in having demolished many fine old buildings. Buildings that in any European city (or possibly Philadelphia) might have cherished and preserved. The only reason the Auditorium was saved was that it was too well built to be torn down. God knows they tried. Returning from service and looking for a studio I immediately thought of the old Auditorium building. Space could be rented but all heating and water pipes had already been removed. The expense of replacing them was prohibitive.

Mrs. John V. Spackner deserves all the credit in the world for her perseverance in restoring this lovely old friend. But Roosevelt College must also be thanked for buying the building so that it could in time be there for Mrs. Spackner.

On its recent formal opening, not feeling the presentation worth the fuss compared to the theater itself, I fell into a reminiscent mood. Obviously many other people were whisked away with me into days gone by.

Meeting any old friends after a long time can be a treacherous thing. Our memories play tricks on us, we elaborate details and paint them with our own colors. Such was not true here. The Auditorium is far more beautiful than remembered because in those days we really never saw it so fresh and clean. Restoring it as Sullivan and Adler intended without the center boxes makes an unbelievable difference. One immediately feels warm and friendly to everyone about-it is gemutlich.

All this rubbish about the back stage being impractical is ridiculous. Many famous theaters in Europe have no more. Every performer worth his or her salt has played in many a theater worse at some time. To innumerate all the famous artists who have appeared on this novel stage is to tell the history of theater in Chicago.

Sitting in this golden haze I could see myself walk out on that stage with seven other boys carrying guitars and mandolins serenading Maria Yurieva in the last act of "Carmen" on October 31st in 1928. It was my debut into the professional theater and an exciting night it was to be on that warm and outgoing stage. There were two other debuts that night-Maria Olszewska as "Carmen" and the lovely American soprano, Alice Mock as "Micaela". Rene Maison was Don Jose and Cesare Fromici as "Escamillo". Far more important to me was Veschlav Swoboda, the ballet master, who had been a teacher of mine and who gave me my first confidence as a performer. Strangely on this stage I was not frightened as I had been on others, instead, I felt surrounded by a friendly congeniality.

This was to be the final season in the Auditorium. By a political play Samuel Insull had the theater condemned so that he could move the company to his "Arm chair" on Wacker Drive. But no season afterwards equaled for me that 1928-29 season. On Mary Garden nights the audiences packed to the gallery cheered more honestly than those trucked up ovations for Callas at the Lyric. When Garden sang her aria in "Thais"- "Why art thou so hard-so unyielding", and lay back on her plush couch in hysterical laughter the audiences went wild. I had chills as many times as I heard it in the next few years. Honeger's "Judith" was the big novelty this year and Garden was at her very best in this dramatic opera. By closing my eyes I can see her creep across the stage like a panther to plunge her dagger in Holofernes sleeping body. This was followed by a weird and strangely beautiful wailing chorus. Off stage Desire Dufrere was screaming and beating the supers in a stage crossing to create excitement. I had accepted a part as an attendant slave to Judith just to be in the opera. Her other opera this season was "Sapho".

This season I heard for the first time the glorious Claudia Muzio, (Aida, Il Trovatore and Traviata), Rosa Raisa

(Norma and Aida), Edith Mason (Don Giovanni) Eva Turner (The Marriage of Figaro), Margherita Salvi (Don Pasquale and Lucia), Cyrena Van Gordon (Samson and Delilah), Rene Maisson (Lohengrin), Alexander Kipnis (Boris), Tito Schipa (Lucia and Traviata with Muzio), John Charles Thomas (the father in Traviata), Jose Mojica (many roles especially with Garden), Richard Bonnelly (Rigoletto) and the lovely Alvie Mock in Lakme. There were many other performers but these stand out in my mind. Indeed, a lot to hear for one to hear in one's first year in the profession-and fresh from the greenhouse.

The ballet boy's dressing room was one flight up off stage to the left and from our door we could see and hear about all that happened on stage. The room was small and when filled with costumes crowded, but, no one thought to complain about walking upstairs, no toilets or showers, no chaise lounge, no dressers, shorter hours and less rehearsal time as they do today. One chaotic night in this dressing room, a newly designed set of costumes by Nicholas Remis-off was brought in for us. Our hats were three feet high and trimmed with peacock feathers. An old Russian superstition of bad luck roused Edward Caton into a fury practically destroying the costumes and us too.

The Auditorium was the first place I was to see and hear the glorious Marian Anderson on stage. Imagine the thrill of hearing that great voice with those acoustics? I heard Elman and Paderewski from the top gallery in this theater. And in dance Martha Graham's Company dancing one of her early gems-"Primitive Mysteries". Uday Shankar played here with his ingratiating company which then included the charming Simkie. Shankar himself with his golden brown skin dressed in a sheer powder blue costume trimmed with tinkling silver ornaments was a feast for the eyes. Max Reinhardt's production of "Midsummer Nights dream" was presented here with the great stage opened out to its fullest size. Mickey Rooney, then a very small boy was Puck and the lovely Nina Theilade floated the air high in the background as some sort of a fairy, a pin spot singling her body out of the air.

Young people today must feel that we exaggerate when we speak of Old Ballet Russe days at the Auditorium...in 1934. Believe me, we do not. Ballet reached its peak in Chicago at this time and we have had little comparable since. Stars galore on stage every night-never just two over publicized stars in inferior ballets. In one evening's performance one might see Massine, Danilova, Riabouchinska, Baronova, Toumanova and with Vania Psota, Edward Borovansky, Nina Verchinina and Lubov Rostova in supporting roles. Many of these Ballet Russe ballets had highly elaborate and bulky scenery and the Auditorium stage was highly adequate for its use. The relation between audience and performer in ballet on this stage was as near perfection as it is possible to be. One of really great dancers (little known today), Leon Woizikovsky was with the company on this first tour. The following year we had David Lichine, Mia Slavenska and Yurek Shabalevsky all extremely popular at this time. What many of these dancers have turned into since these days is the result of poorer times, taking the wrong chance and sometimes just plain human failure.

In 1934 we were to see Serge Lifar with his company at this theater. And whatever he is today detracts nothing from the fact that he was an exciting personality and dancer in "L' Apres-Midi d'un Faune", "Spectre de la Rose", and "La Chatte" at that time.

During the later years of the Auditorium I also appeared in "Emperor Jones" with Lawrence Tibbett, miming the five characters that the Emperor shoots in the back. Gruenberg's opera was a dramatic and exciting work and probably is not performed today because of its technical difficulties. During the World's Fair we appeared there in "Les Sylphides" and "Prince Igor" with Laurent Novikoff choreographing. The soloists in "Les Sylphides" were Bentley Stone, Harriet Lundgren and Ruth Pryor. During one of the last rehearsals for "Prince Igor" Michael Fokine visited to see how faithfully Mr. Novikoff had restaged his ballet. At this same time

we were working with Mr. Fokine at the Blackstone theatre dancing "Coppelia". At about this time I enjoyed a weeks run in "Elijah" dancing with Jane Burkhalter. The finale of the theater (as far as we were concerned) was the attempt to make it a Theater Night Club. For its opening we all danced in a huge ballet to Debussy music around a real live fountain in mid stage. Following the ballet Lottie Mayer's Diving Girls performed in the fountain which raised and was a deep glass tank above stage.

With this last attempt followed a long degrading and humiliating period for this grand old place. Many other Chicagoans have a store of memories equal to mine, I'm sure. And it is easy to see why such crowds flocked to its reopening. It was not, as Mr. Willis wrote, that the New York City Ballet was so great. The Auditorium Theater was the star of this performance. We are all happy to have it back and hope that managers, booking monopolies and unions will not kill its chance of complete survival.